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ABSTRACT

Composition professors are in a valuable and enviable position to create a fairly wide range of collaborative opportunities between the college and the community. It is a natural extension of the collaboration engendered in classrooms, writing centers, and departments. These collaborative projects with the community provide a lot of "bang for the buck," with usually no more investment than what it costs to purchase a Lasso printer for a middle school magazine, bookstore certificates for mentors, or a contest prize or two. Institutions gain publicity, community identity, and prestige, along with the chance to recruit new students. University students gain in mentoring experience, resume line items, sometimes money, and certainly in self-confidence. One project, the K-12 Partnership Grant, is funded by an annual fund at the University of Michigan-Flint financed by alumni donations and community gifts, with a range of activities including African stories, experiments, journal writing and a science fair in biology, chemistry, physics, and earth science; Latin American culture; robotics; a young authors workshop; and an essay anthology. For the young authors workshop, for example, 26 university students, enrolled in English 412, Writing for Middle and Secondary School Teachers, designed portfolio workshops for middle school students. This culminated in publication, hands-on networked computer revision, and preparation for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. (Contains a checklist for college community projects.) (CK)

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RESOURCES AND STRATEGIES FOR WRITING PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

While some aspects of collaboration have lost the popularity they had attained in the 1980's, largely due, I believe, to collaborative efforts being perceived as somehow the tools of social constructivism, I think most of us here at this conference are still fans. Perhaps the cooling of affection for collaboration has more to do with realizing it's hard work to get it right. And also that using small groups and peer-editing in the classroom is only the first step to achieving success. We've discovered that our students are often loath to work together for 15 minutes, let alone a lifetime. But we persevere, and they perspire, and, if we're lucky and diligent, they get it. However, if we truly believe in the fruits of collaboration, we do our students a disservice by limiting collaboration to English 101.

Last week I asked one of my colleagues in the Biology Department, who has worked with Bob in our Summer Institute, if she saw college-community projects as being in their middle age of development. She replied, "More like their infancy." On reflection, I decided she was probably right. For, while writing centers such as ours, founded on peer-tutoring from the beginning, are celebrating their silver anniversary, still too little is being done in collaboration with the outside world.

Composition professors are in a valuable and enviable position to create a fairly wide range of collaborative opportunities between the college and the community. I see this as a natural extension of the collaboration we engender in our classrooms, our

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writing centers, and our departments. From our experience, these collaborative projects provide a lot of bang for the buck, usually no more investment than what it costs to purchase a laser printer for a middle-school magazine, some honoraria in the form of bookstore gift certificates for mentors, a contest prize or two. Given the great return on investment, this is small change, even for relatively strapped schools.

That is, for very little money in the larger scheme of things, we all are rewarded. Our institutions gain publicity, community identity and prestige, along with the chance to recruit new students. Our university students gain in mentoring experience, resume line items, sometimes some money, and certainly in self-confidence. Our community members—including the kids, their parents and teachers—all gain in new experiences, new adventures, new connections. And we gain the satisfactions of success. During a time of increased territoriality and competition, even within academic departments, we've found it a pleasure to practice what we preach, working together on articles and presentations such as this one in an attempt to collaborate with you.

And remember that there is always some money that goes begging. Even colleges and school districts that don't have formal programs and agencies for collaborative projects will usually have some sort of slush fund for unexpected, but cheap, activities.

But we have to ask. We have to be prepared and unashamed to beg a little. For, while the money collaboration requires is often minuscule, the time required is often substantial, although rarely daunting. But it does require some—so be prepared for a certain investment of your time in looking for available money, filling out forms, recruiting students, filling out forms, preparing budgets, filling out forms—well, you get the idea.

I would like to outline some opportunities available for college and community collaboration by citing some of those projects our school, the University of Michigan-Flint, has been involved in recently. While your college situation may differ a little or a lot, I hope to point out how you might discover cognate opportunities.

The first project I'd like to talk about is called the K-12 Partnership Grant. These are funded by the UM-Flint Annual Fund that is financed by alumni donations and gifts from community members. While the Office of Development administers ours, your school probably has some similar agency. Our faculty was able to have six grants funded last year for $1000 each. For this amount we established contact between approximately 50 University students, 200 K-12 students, 15 faculty supervisors, and 15 community-school teachers. The range of activities included projects devoted to African stories, experiments, journal writing and a science fair in biology, chemistry, physics, and earth science, Latin American culture, robotics, a young authors workshop, and an essay anthology, which Bob ~~will~~ talk about in more detail.

For the project "African Stories and Tales Come Alive," as it was called, the collaboration resulted in elementary school children visiting our Flint Youth Theater, making masks at the Flint Institute of Arts, hearing story-tellers relating African folk tales, receiving over $500 in African literature, and the writing and performing of their own folk tales.

For the Young Authors Workshop, 26 University students, enrolled in English 412, Writing for Middle and Secondary School Teachers, designed portfolio writing workshops for Whittier Middle School students. This culminated in publication, hands-

on networked computer revision, and preparation for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program.

On a somewhat larger scale, we have the Young Writers Academy. This was a five-year program that cost about $5000 and ran during the summer at the University for three weeks, involving about 50 sixth-graders, one director and assistant, five teachers from the community, and ten English-education majors who mentored in the program for class credit. While this program was established to teach poetry, it could easily be adapted to include fiction, non-fiction, family heritage, and so on. And while this was largely funded through grants from various arts and community councils, parents were eager to pay a nominal tuition for something a little more academic than camp. Let me repeat: this was to have their children write poetry. And after the first year, we had to turn students away.

As many of you know, administrators never seem to have money for our raises, but it often magically appears when it results in projects that will reflect well on the college. Likely funding may be found through your Office of the Provost, Academic Dean, Chancellor, President, and so on. But less obvious sources might include community essay contests tied in to Women's History Month, Black History Month, or other college-community celebrations. Both coordinating committees for these months have been very forthcoming with investments of enthusiasm, clerical help, publicity, and money. Since the goal of establishing collaboration with the community is so important for participation for these events, we were pleased with the spirit of everyone concerned.

Before I end, and lest I paint too rosy of a picture of college-community collaboration, allow me to offer up some caveats in addition to possible difficulties with

funding. One, please give others you foresee as participants plenty of time to become involved. Their schedules are probably no more flexible than yours are. And also demand this from others who ask you to join in. Two, realize that if college-community projects are new to your school, your ideas may seem strange, indeed. Especially if they don't quite fit in with someone's Master Plan—or Mission Statement—or Total Quality Management. Or whatever. And three, when your great idea works, be prepared to have someone else take credit for it. Don't let 'em.

Thank you.

## SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLEGE COMMUNITY PROJECTS: A CHECKLIST

### I. CHECK OUT AVAILABLE FUNDING

**A. DEPARTMENTS**

1. ENGLISH

2. EDUCATION

3. OTHERS WITH WRITING COMPONENT

**B. STUDENT SERVICES**

1. WRITING CENTERS

2. SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEES

3. HONOR ORGANIZATIONS

**C. ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**

1. CHANCELLOR/PRESIDENT

2. PROVOST/VICE-CHANCELLOR

3. COLLEGE DEVELOPMENT
   a. COMMUNITY OUTREACH
   b. ANNUAL FUNDS
   c. COLLEGE RELATIONS

**C.WRITING CLASSES**

1. ADVANCED RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

2. BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS/TECHNICAL WRITING

3. CREATIVE WRITING

**IV. KEEP GOOD RECORDS OF EVERY ASPECT OF PROJECT FOR REPORTS**

**A.PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED**

**B.RECEIPTS OF ALL PURCHASES AND SERVICES**

**C.PUBLICITY**

**D.EFFECTS ON COLLEGE AND COMMUNITY**

**E.PLANS—WHAT NEXT?**

**D. LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

**E. STATE ARTS AND HUMANITIES COUNCILS**

**II. PLAN YOUR APPLICATION**

**A. SHOW HOW PROJECT WILL ASSIST...**
1. COLLEGE

2. STUDENT MENTORS

3. TARGET SCHOOL OR ORGANIZATION

4. TEACHERS OR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

**B. SHOW SHORT-TERM , LONG-TERM GAINS**

**C. SHOW CONNECTIONS WITH EXISTING PROGRAMS**

**D. BE SPECIFIC IN BUDGET REQUESTS**

**E. PROVIDE HISTORY OF OTHER SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS**

**III. RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS**
**A. ENGLISH AND EDUCATION MAJORS**

**B. WRITING CENTER TUTORS**